No. 11. On Compassion.

Job 19th. 21st Verse.

Have Pity upon me, have Pity upon me, O, ye my Friends, for the hand of God hath touched me.

Such are many of the Afflictions of life, they can be no way alleviated without the sympathy of Friendship, and the tenderness of Compassion.

For though a consciousness of Integrity is the only source of comfort—though a sense of uniform rectitude is alone able to support the violence of external assaults—yet sometimes so formidable is their onset, so heavy is their pressure, the gentle hand of compassion is required to ease the smart of anguish and deaden the pain of affliction.

Of the truth of this position, the Patriarch of Ux is an eminent example.

"There is none like him, saith the Almighty, upon the Earth—a perfect & an upright man—one that feareth God & escheweth evil."—Notwithstanding this testimony of his Integrity, he exclaims in the pathetic language of the text—Have pity, &c.

The first account which is given of this son of af-

fliction, after premising his Uprightneſs and Piety, is the Accumulation of his Riches, and the Splendor of his Houſehold, in conſequence of which, he was conſidered "the "greateſt of all the men in the East." Bleſsed with a large and goodly Family—the Ties of kindred, cemented by the Bands of Concord, Amity, & Love—he was in poſseſsion of every good this world can beſtow. But, to prove him in the furnace of affliction; to know of a truth, whether he ſerved God from a principle of piety, or as the ſecurity of his fortune, meſsenger ſucceeded meſsenger—one acquainting him that "his oxen and his aſſes were "ſlain by his enemies the Sabeans"—another, "that the "fire of God had fallen from heaven, and burnt up the "ſheep and the ſervants and conſumed them"—a third "that the men of the land of Chaldea had fallen on his "Camels & carried them away, & ſlain his ſervants with "the edge of the ſword:" whilſt he was reluting theſe la tidings, another arrived to inform him "that as his ſon "and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their "eldeſt brother's houſe, a great wind came from the wi "derneſs, and ſmote the four corners of the houſe, and

"fell on the young men, and they were dead." His veſſel of ſorrow was already full, but this laſt drop made the waters of affliction overflow. He ſeems marked, by a peculiar deſignation, to bear the weight of God's Vengeance. In the morning he is ſheltered and protected from the Violence of Storms, and the Horror of Shipwreck; in the evening he is ſtruggling with the waves of diſappointment, and plunged in the abyſs of forſaken Hope. And how does he receive this ſevere Chaſtening of the Almighty?——He does not break out in harſhneſs of Invective, or bitterneſs of Complaint, but, with the piety of reſignation, accompanied with the feelings of Senſibility—— "naked," ſays he, "came I out of my mother's womb, "and naked ſhall I return; the Lord gave, and the "Lord hath taken away——Bleſſed be the Name of the "Lord!"

There are not wanting Inſtances, it muſt be confeſſed, of men, who have experienced ſuch a reverſe of fortune, and who, inſtead of drooping under the Burthen, have riſen ſuperior to all their Calamities——men, who have been ſupported by the force of Spirits, the advantages

of Health, and the afsistance and consolation of Friends; of all which, as singular as undeserved, the upright Patriarch was deprived: his own person was afflicted with a grievous Distemper, and his Friends, miserable Comforters! together with the wife of his Bosom—and surely she was bound by the Tie of Interest, the Impulse of Affection, the Obligation of Duty, with a lenient hand, to have softened all his sorrows, were leagued, all, in an unnatural Alliance, to insult him with his Misfortunes, & reproach him for his Insincerity. The Patriarch here exhibits a perfect pattern of Wisdom, Resignation, and Piety: When his Complaints are disregarded, and his Supplications despised, he raises his thoughts, in the consciousness of his Innocence, from Earth to Heaven, from human comforters to the source of all consolation—"I "know that my Redeemer liveth, and tho', after my "Skin, worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall "I see God. I shall come even to his seat—He will "put strength in me, for doth He not see my Ways & "count all my Steps?" Anticipating, in humble Expectation, "this recompence of reward—till I die, says

" he, I will not remove my integrity from me—my " righteouſneſs I hold faſt, and will not let it go, my " Heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live."

God-Almighty, in his infinite wiſdom, having aſſigned to his creatures an endleſs variety of Situations, one " to abound"—whilſt another " is periſhing with hunger"—one to enjoy his health and ſtrength, in the fulneſs of ſpirits and the energy of vigor, whilſt another is racked with Pain or diſabled by Infirmity, it may not be an uſeleſs Employment of our time, to ſhew the proviſion the great Father of our Exiſtence has made for thoſe of his Children who are pining in want, or languiſhing in ſickneſs.

The firſt conſideration is, that, as all mankind have derived their being from the ſame fountain of life, and all, upon the ſame foot, without any particular Regard or Claim to his favor, it follows that the Rich, out of their abundance, are to ſupply the wants and neceſſities of the Poor.

And the reaſon on which this is founded is incontrovertible. " For who maketh thee to differ from ano-

" ther?" Are you blefsed with hereditary Wealth—pro-
vided to your hands with care, as it is fquandered, often,
without judgment? And does it never occur to you that
you are highly favored of Heaven, and that fome Ac-
knowledgment is due to Him from whom you have re-
ceived it?

And what Acknowledgment fo just and natural
as " binding up the broken in heart, and giving medi-
" cine to heal their ficknefs?"

Again. Have you been fucceffful in bufinefs, &
fortunate in your intercourfe with the world? Have your
projects fucceeded beyond your expectations, and have riches
rolled by every Tide, & been wafted by every Gale? This
is under the Auffpices, & by the permiffion of Heaven—
" Not your hand, nor your might have gotten you this
" wealth."—Or, if inftead of this fuperfluity of Abun-
dance you are but tolerably profperous, to whom are you
indebted? If then the fun of Profperity fhine on you, &
withhold his fostering Beams from others—is it not an
Intimation from " the Giver of every good Gift," ex-
preffed in Characters too legible to be overlooked, and too

important to be disregarded, to wipe away the Tear from the Cheek of sorrow, and comfort the Heart that throbs with Affliction?

But let it not be imagined the exercise of compassion is to be confined entirely to the Rich and Prosperous. No—To instruct the Ignorant, to reprove the Prophane, to cheer the Desponding is the common duty of all mankind. To satisfy the Doubts, to remove the Scruples, to appease the Disquietude of our Neighbor, is incumbent on all, the lowest Lot, of Humanity.

But the great Author of our being has made a further provision for those to whom He has denied the good things of this life, in the benevolent principles He has implanted within us. At the sight of a distressed object we feel, and we cannot help feeling, strong emotions of Compassion. This generous principle arises with an impatient and imperceptible hurry in our breasts. Our wishes to relieve are eager to be gratified, and if we feel the want of Power, we would purchase it at the Expence of a Participation of the wretch's sufferings.

This humane principle receives not only the sanc-

tion but the encouragement of Revelation, and is placed before us in every light that may engage our Regard, or interest our Affections. Compaſsion is there recommended by Example, and enjoined by Authority—it is required as an indiſpenſible article of our duty, as a diſtinguiſhing mark of our adoption.

To acts of mercy we have a farther Inducement ſet before us in a living and familiar pattern. The holy Jeſus, "the Author and Finisher of our faith," was conſtantly employed in removing the Ills and relieving the Infirmities of thoſe who labored under them.

Thus are we excited by the ſuggestions of our nature—required by the precepts of our Religion—encouraged by the example of our Redeemer to alleviate the Diſtreſses of others, and adminiſter Comfort to thoſe who cannot adminiſter it to themſelves.

With the hard-hearted and inhuman, theſe Arguments, & Arguments like theſe—tho' founded in reaſon, and ſupported by Revelation, will have little weight.

Yet, to theſe ſons of Inhumanity let us ſuggest, that, ſo uncertain is every poſſeſsion on this ſide the grave, the

most affluent, however fenced he may be with all human securities, knows not how soon he may stand in need of the assistance & friendship of others: or, if he is not reduced to distress, God often denies him the power of enjoying, either by want of health, or, through a dread of poverty, the Riches, which, with such avaricious Parsimony, he hath scraped together.

Than such a Spectacle—a man surrounded with abundance, and withheld, by an Almighty Power, from an application of it to the conveniencies and comforts his situation requires—there can be nothing more melancholy.

"Man, says the Scripture," is born to "trouble" —it accompanies every state as naturally as the shadow accompanies the body. Every wise man, therefore, tho' he cannot dry up its source, will break its power & avert its fury.—He will imitate the conduct of the Patriarch, that, when his Troubles came upon him—whether the chagrin of disappointment—the loss of health—or the frowns of fortune—he may posses one comfort greater and better than all this world can beston—the reflection—the

cheering reflection—of having uniformly and effectually promoted the welfare and happineſs of his fellow-creatures. "When the Ear hears me," may he ſay, "then it bleſſes "me; and when the Eye ſees me it gives witneſs to me, "becauſe I delivered the poor that cry, the fatherleſs and "him that hath none to help him. The bleſſing of him "that is ready to perish comes upon me, and I cauſe "the widow's heart to ſing for joy.—I am Eyes to the "blind, and Feet am I to the lame."

To excite in every Breast the amiable virtue of Compaſſion—let us take a view of the dwellings of Affliction—not what Imagination may create, or Fancy feign—but what is too frequently exemplified by our own obſervation. How often do we behold a large and innocent family, deprived of all the comforts & the neceſsaries of life by an unforeſeen and unexpected stroke, without the power of making any proviſion for themſelves—unable, through weakneſs, to earn their bread, & aſhamed, through the recollection of better days, to beg it.—Into ſuch a dwelling let us enter—and inſtances, God knows, of ſuch uncertainty of all human good, meet us, very often meet

us, in our passage through life. We see the mother of a numerous offspring, overwhelmed with all the distraction of sorrow, lamenting, with equal affection, the loss of an indulgent Husband and the fate of helpless Orphans.— Every Expedient which occurs to her bewildered mind to provide them with the comforts of a decent Competency, & preserve them from the snares of impending Ruin—she adopts as likely, and as soon rejects as impracticable. Hear the disconsolate Widow crying over her Children with the feelings of maternal Tenderness. 'I am left, 'my Children, your Protector, without the means of pro- 'tection. The few comforts of life we enjoyed in common 'together are fled with your affectionate Parent who pro- 'cured them. Anxious to provide against the vicissitudes 'of fortune and the casualties of accident, he sunk un- 'der the Load of Evils which his solicitude suggested. 'The bitterness of Death was encreased with the Appre- 'hensions of what we should suffer when we were left be- 'hind him. The Stroke is now given, & we feel, what 'I beheld, at a distance, with gloomy horror. Had 'it pleased God to have spared him whilst you were able

'to support yourselves—whilst he had impressed on
'your minds a strong sense of Integrity and Reli-
'ligion—fortified by such principles—we would have
'struggled hard for an honest livelihood, for a virtuous
'support. But tho' the Scene be so lamentably changed—
'tho every prospect of Comfort be vanished—under the
'Providence of the Almighty we will not despair. Thy
'ways, O God, are unsearchable—and if it seem good to
'Thee to deprive us of the means of subsistence here—for
'all thy dispensations, however unpalatable, are tender
'mercies—grant us, gracious God, soon to meet, where
'Tears, and Sorrow, and Anguish shall be known no
'more.'

Let the most hard-hearted be witness to such a scene of parental fondness—deep distress, and pious resignation—let him revolve in his mind what such a family must suffer, and he cannot, surely, refuse shewing Compassion to them. I will only observe that the poorest, the meanest, the most contemptible are amongst those for whom the Redeemer of the world is making Intercessions to their Father who is in Heaven "with groanings that cannot be

" uttered." And he does not intercede, we know, in vain. Resemble then the Father of the Universe—Attend to the supplicating voice of Distress—"-Have Pity upon me—
" have Pity upon me, O, ye my Friends—for the hand
" of God hath touched me."

Theoph^s. J. St. John.

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